

HOCKADAY

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my dorm who I hardly knew.

I think I went with different people to just about every game of my freshman year. In later years we road-tripped to Berkeley, Seattle and Los Angeles. It was all about football. In fact, sometimes my whole life simply revolved around football.

"Wanna go camping this weekend?"
"Nope. Stanford's in town."

Simply put, football is huge in the life of the college student. And most alums are diehards until they move across the country. And even then, they're still diehard. The Pit Crew is great and all, but I'll say it: It's all freshmen. Sorry, Nate Jolly, but it's true.

I don't mean to knock basketball, but football is tradition. It's yellow leaves and "It never rains at Autzen Stadium." It's the green turf and the splintered seats. And in Oregon, football is now skyboxes and Xboxes. The former

is the main feature of newly-expanded Autzen and the latter is the main feature of newly-expanded locker rooms. Between the Moshofsky Center, the Casanova Center and Autzen Stadium, the football facilities are some of the nicest on campus. That convergence of hot dogs and hot housing has made football the sport of the student.

It's more than just a long run down the field. It's changing your calendar every Saturday for three months. It's skipping classes to wait in a cold ticket line.

It's standing in the rain, earlobe-to-earlobe with somebody you just met in the first quarter, screaming your lungs out for a team of guys much bigger and much faster than you. But they're wearing that same "O" that you have on your hat, and somehow you relate.

That's Oregon football.

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when you break the golden rule of taking off a mascot's head. Of course, Mandrake took off his own head when he slammed into the basketball goal's rim in an attempt to make an acrobatic dunk. Watching that thing hatch at Autzen Stadium may have been one of the darkest days in Duck football. Luckily they rarely bring him out at basketball games. If the absence of Mandrake isn't enough to like basketball more, I don't know what is.

Also, basketball gives you two games a week, so if we lose to Portland on Thursday, ideally we only have to wait until Sunday to redeem ourselves. In football, you're going to have to wait a good, long week.

The time factor has got to play an important role, too. Apparently we've never figured out what exactly "offsides" is, since it feels like we get penalized with it every other play in football, dragging the game on for hours. Of course you could say the same thing about the basketball team never learning what constitutes a foul. "You can't spell foul without Flo," I'd always say. Flo Hartenstein fouled more often than Anthony Norwood/Lever changed his name, but how can you dislike Flo? He's a world traveler from Germany and Springfield.

While I can forgive Flo, there are some people on the football team I just can't forgive. For instance, before there was Jared Siegel, there was Josh Frankel. While there was great amusement in the fact that his name resembled that of the character Ray Finkle in "Ace Ventura: Pet Detective," it got a little tiring yelling out "Laces up!" before every kick. Blowing three field goals and an extra point all in one game? I just can't forget or forgive.

When comparing the two sports, you have to take into account the heroes. There are always those players who suffer injuries, but heroically continue, because our bench is only one player deep. For Oregon football there was Reuben Droughns, who threw out the padding protecting his bruised ribs because he kept dropping the ball (key point). The same year, Duck basketball had A.D. Smith who fractured his cheekbone in a freak rebounding accident. He returned with a face mask a la "Bill Lambier" and looked more intimidating than any Churchill grad I've ever seen.

And the number one reason why Duck basketball is better than Duck football has to come down to the end. Every year we have to watch the BCS computer spit out the rankings. Sometimes our school makes the list, sometimes our school makes the list lower than we think it should. In short, the BCS is a horse that should be shot and put out of its misery. Here's an idea: Let's just put all the good and slightly decent teams in a tournament, where they play each other, and the students and Rick Neuheisel gamble on the outcome. Yes, my friends, there is nothing sweeter than March Madness. Calling those nine over eight upsets, which take no talent but bring all the glory, even if it is Utah over Oregon. Compare that to watching the Gallery Furniture.com Bowl. No contest.

So entertain yourselves in the fall watching Kellen Clemens without his sidekick, Jason "Don't compare me to Joey" Fife, but let's be honest. It's just the hor d'oeuvre to the main meal: Aaron Brooks and Malik Hairston. So make sure to pack Mac, kids!


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